

Dear Mr. Goodyear,

STANLEY SWIDERSKI

Dad never put down anything in writing, all I have are my memories of the one story he told us. He never to my knowledge ever wrote anything down. He would not talk about it much, use to say it was "Hell on Earth" that morning.

The following is the story he did tell us:

He was Printer First Class on the Oklahoma, and had been out Saturday night, bar hopping and drinking rum and coca colas. So when he got back to the ship and hit his rack he had put quite a few of those drinks in him. Just before dawn, he kept dreaming about my sister Jacqueline, (she died while Mom and Dad were stationed in China, she had leukemia, she was only 3 1/2 years old). Anyway, he kept dreaming of Jackie, she would stand at the end of his rack and say "Daddy, get up, don't go to sleep". "Please Daddy, get up." Well he tossed and turned and had a heck of a hang over, so he tried to go back to sleep, and Jackie came back to him in a dream again saying the same thing, "Daddy, get up, don't go to sleep." So finally, he said the heck with this, he got up, decided he'd get a cup of coffee and go sit with the watch topside. He went to the print shop and made a fresh pot of coffee (he knew the watches coffee would be way too strong for his hangover stomach). While he was climbing the ladder to have his coffee with the watch, the attack started, and the Oklahoma was hit with the first torpedos. He said all the men who were a sleep in the area he was in, were killed. He always said my sister was his Guardian Angel that morning. Once on deck, things were a mess, he did go to a gun turret and tried to shoot at some of the planes, but the ship started turning over on her side. So he started to jump overboard, he did say that he pushed some young Ensign in the water and told him to swim for his life. Then he jumped in and swam underwater because of the burning fuel, and then was picked up by a small life boat later.

The next day he volunteered to go out with one of the other ships that was still sea worthy and hunt for the Japanese subs in the area, but because he was a First Class, they told him they needed him back at the ship since he was one of a few senior petty officers not injured etc. He did say he was part of the working party that tried to get some of the men out that were trapped.

Those are the only stories he ever told. And then, being the "Old Sailor" that he was, he had to have a few beers in him to tell you those. Dad was a real "Sailors" Sailor. He had tattoos all over. Maybe someone will remember him for that, he had oil can and hinges on the back of his knees. He had a pig and a rooster on his feet, and lots of other things on his arms and back. I can remember as a little girl going to the beach with him, and everyone staring at him and pointing. But that was okay by me, because he was Dad!!!

I hope that this will help some what with the book. I wish he had written something down. We all would have loved to be able to read it. We do have his "Green Book" that contained his personnel records and which ships he served on. And a few other pieces of his 20 years in the Navy. My youngest brother has them in a glass case in his home.

His name of course was Stanley Joseph Swiderski, Printer First Class. (Many years later after he'd been retired they changed his rate to Lithographer, he hated that.) He was buried in his Chief's Uniform, and it still had the Printer Rating Badge on it. He died in March of 1975. My mother just passed away in May of 2001 he was 92 years old and the story I sent to you is the only one she ever remembered Dad talking about.